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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000332

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BX](#)

SUBJECT: AND THEN THERE WAS ONE: BRUNEI SUSPENDS POLITICAL PARTY

REF: BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 109

Classified By: CDA Justin Friedman, reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In mid September, the GoB suspended one of Brunei's two remaining political parties, the PPKB for failing to file annual reports with the Registrar of Societies (ROS). PPKB President Abdul Latiff Chuchu readily admits his predecessor failed to file the mandatory reports, but asserts that the way the GoB acted indicates that the GoB still harbors suspicions about him personally. The ROS told us that the move was not directed at any one, or at a planned IFES seminar on party development Post was supporting in partnership with both the PPKB and the sole remaining political party, the NDP. While the ROS and the GoB have a clear interest in ensuring that financial reporting regulations are rigorously applied as Brunei begins to develop the instruments of democracy, we will be watching closely to see if this "yellow card" was about the rules of the game or the plays the PPKB was making. END SUMMARY.

PPKB SUSPENDED

¶2. (SBU) On September 20, the Registrar of Societies (ROS) issued a provisional order temporarily dissolving one of Brunei's two remaining political parties, the 22 year old PPKB. The PPKB is headed by Dr. Abdul Latiff Chuchu, a former ISD detainee. Dr. Latiff was elected president of the PPKB in April after the previous president, Dr. Hatta Zainal Abidin, was forced to step down under Brunei law after he declared personal bankruptcy (see also ref for the demise of the PAKAR party). As a former detainee, Latiff had to seek permission to join any political party. He told us that he was only given permission to join the PPKB in January 2006. According to letters from the ROS shared with us by the PPKB, Dr. Hatta had failed to file mandatory annual financial reports for the PPKB from 2004-2006. Latiff told us he had responded to the ROS that Hatta had not turned over the documentation necessary for him to file. Latiff has initiated a civil lawsuit against Hatta for negligence and sent an appeal letter to Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah to try to overturn the suspension order.

GOB MOTIVES?

¶3. (C) Dr. Latiff told DCM and Pol/Mil Assistant that he saw two motivations behind the suspension of the PPKB. The first is that some people in the Ministry of Home Affairs (he

alluded the Minister himself, Pehin Adanan Mohamad Yusof) are attacking Latiff personally as they did not want to see him become politically active again. The other motivation, in Latiff's thinking, is that the PPKB had been too vocal about seeking the Legislative Council (LegCo) to become a fully elected body as soon as possible, with the Sultan giving up the post of Prime Minister and the cabinet selected from the majority party ranks. Members of the friendly rival National Democratic Party (NDP) have told us that they believe Latiff was too aggressive in pursuing his democracy agenda. While neither party challenges the Sultan directly or personally, and both parties call for an elected LegCo, the NDP seeks an interim step of a partially elected LegCo, as Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah has promised when he restored the LegCo in 2004.

ROS REPLIES

14. (C) Pehin Zainuddin Jalani, the Registrar of Societies and Chief of Police, told the Ambassador on October 27 that he was forced to sign the temporary dissolution order as the PPKB had not complied with Brunei's disclosure regulations despite receiving written warnings and several months to comply. He said that the GoB wants the PPKB (and the NDP) to become more professional organizations and has rigorous rules to allow and guide their development. He said that the ROS will re-register the PPKB if it complies with the regulations.

15. (C) Post had been working with the PPKB to host, together with the NDP, a forum on political party development with a speaker from IFES. The PPKB suspension came just one week prior to our scheduled forum. Zainuddin told the Ambassador

* Missing Section 002 *
